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Informal Branding

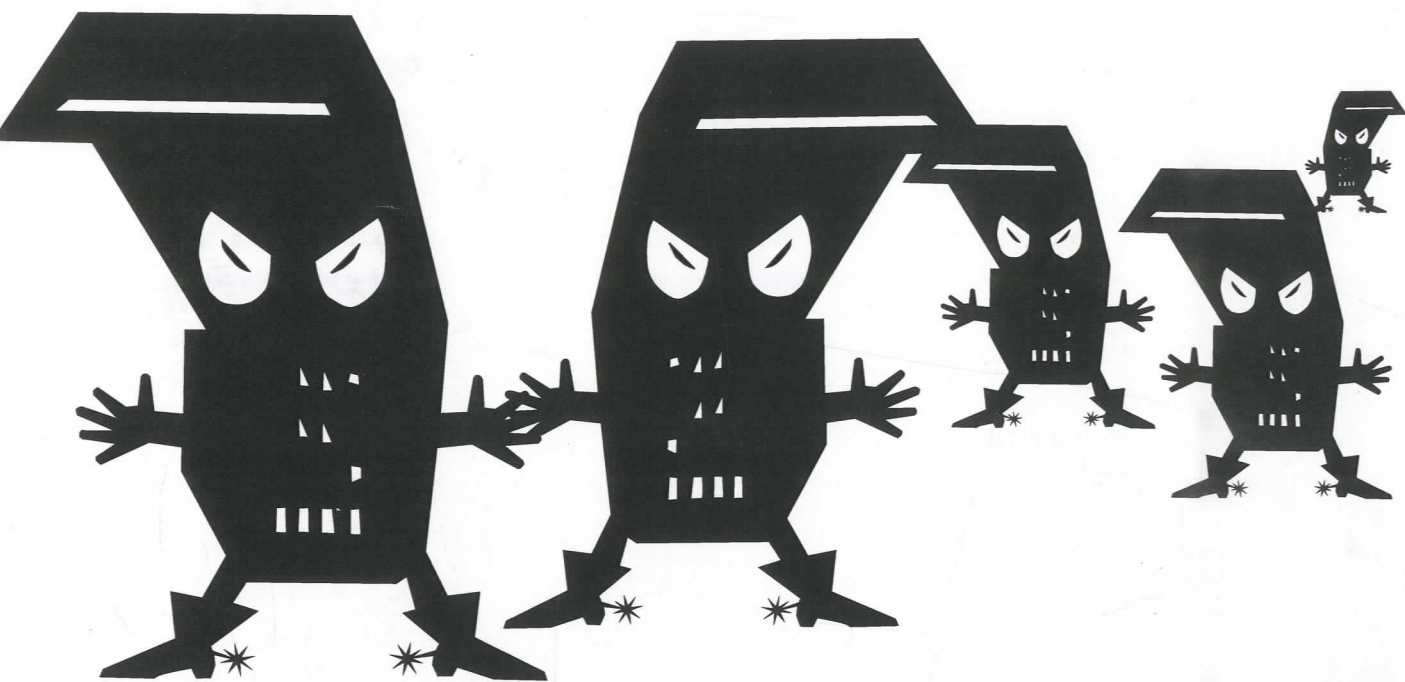
Casey Allen

Advisors: Richard Rosa + Alexander Eisenschmidt

Introduction

The **informal brand** aims to become a process of design that answers questions of identity in architecture. By establishing a methodology for design with an emphasis on program, context, and performance a building will be able to become a “brand” for the company it represents, the context the project is situated in, and the typology of program it represents. The following pages set out to documents this design process through site and program analysis derived from case studies and text reference. The preceding analysis will result in a speculation of programmatic relationships and there implications on the site.





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plasticity icon form iconography logo shape
background organization innovation consistency
synergy culture brand graphic
context geometric form icon logo shape
program identity global
collaboration image
customization
attention
selling
buying
capturing
holding
tracking
quantifying
manipulating
differentiation
communication
foreground
novelty
sameness

Logo, Icon, and Identity

In today's fast paced consumer driven society, a product's image is the single most important asset towards its future. A single image can create a sense of desire and fantasy that is an essential part of any branding or marketing strategy. As a form of communication, a brand constantly focuses its energy on creating attention. The buying, selling, capturing, holding, tracking, quantifying, and of course manipulating attention can only create a volatile environment where media saturation becomes corrosive towards the notion of identity.

In recent years, architecture has become a main focus within "brand communication". Architecture and built form in general have the ability to situate themselves within a physical context as well as becoming an iconic symbol constantly creating attention. The issue here has become the over use of symbolic form in architecture. How is identity even a possibility in architecture when the most extravagant forms lie in a manic state of sameness?

Because formal ambition has resulted in an architecture of novelty, identity and the new icon now need to be created through a process of graphic expediency. This process of graphic expediency begins with the inherently informational "logo". A "logo" is an intrinsically graphic shape that has the ability to travel across the global community quickly, catering to the quick image conscious consumer. The logo has the ability to create a sense of identity towards an idea, but not a place. By creating a reconciliation between the logos graphic system of information and the icons contextual presence, an enhanced form of brand communication is possible. The collaboration of these two opposing sides can establish identity within a local context, as well as reach out to the global community.

In a corporate society that has a seemingly infinite amount of competition in every conceivable market, how is it possible to create an identity for yourself? This problem is extremely apparent in the entertainment industry where every company is fighting over the same idea, product, and market. In cinema, one company always wins. Two studios never make the same movie and release it at the same time to the same audience. But in the world of virtual interactive entertainment, or video games, gaming platforms cater to game developers and therefore different platforms play the same game. Of the three main companies that supply gaming platforms, Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo, only Nintendo is completely dedicated to the video game industry.

Nintendo has become a laboratory of innovation, where current trends are melted with tradition. Their ability to focus on quality/creative products and not gadgetry is what establishes them as innovators towards the gaming industry. Even though the presence of Nintendo is currently established in the global community, their future development will be dependent upon the creative and inspiring environment that the company offers its employees.

This thesis proposal will act as a critique and redesign of the current condition of the Nintendo Headquarters building in Kyoto Japan. The criticism stems from the restrictive environment of the fortified box that separates itself from the community. While the site remains the same, the program and its arrangement will be modified to form a functional system of relationships designed to enhance work productivity and creativity that also incorporates public amenity. The final intent of the proposal will be to create an identity for Nintendo that is the result of the programmatic, contextual, and performative composition of the new typology, the private headquarters that is open to the public.

The Process of Designing an Icon (part 1): defining the Logo



Downsview park entry_Koolhaas/Mau

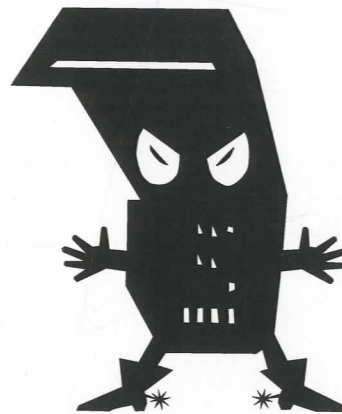
Since the beginning of the post-modern movement, iconic architecture has been dominated by formally driven projects designed to create an identity based on differentiation. Today, “different” projects, typically based on digital intricacy, dominate the landscape of our environment. The attempt for architects to design differentiated buildings are resulting in an ultimately watered down form of iconography.

The studies that Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown did in their book “Learning From Las Vegas” documented Las Vegas as a city of differentiation. The early 1970s book looked at the graphically informational bill boards that situated themselves on every vertical surface possible. Even though the work of Robert Venturi lent itself to becoming informational based on decoration, an interesting question arises about the value of graphic expediency in architectural design.

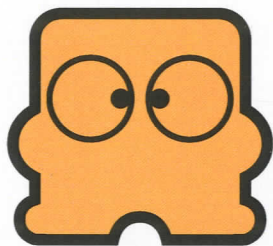
The notion a graphic expediency can be best described as an informational graphic based on collected data that is ultimately narrowed down to the vital material for a project. MVRDV use ideas of graphic expediency as their basis for design. The Expo Pavilion (page 17) examines multiple landscape

typologies through a series of homogeneous diagrams depicting the information essential to each landscape type. The process of graphic expediency subsequently becomes a condensed configuration of this information or what is known as the “logo”.

The logo has now become a valuable tool towards architectural design and specifically architecture that situates itself in the realm of the iconic. The logo itself, is a hyper-informational condensed graphic designed to express itself explicitly and without confusion to a broad base audience. Always displayed as a 2 dimensional “shape” the logo is representative of a thought process and is expandible through the virtual world as a symbol and therefore universally communicative.



Logo vs. Icon



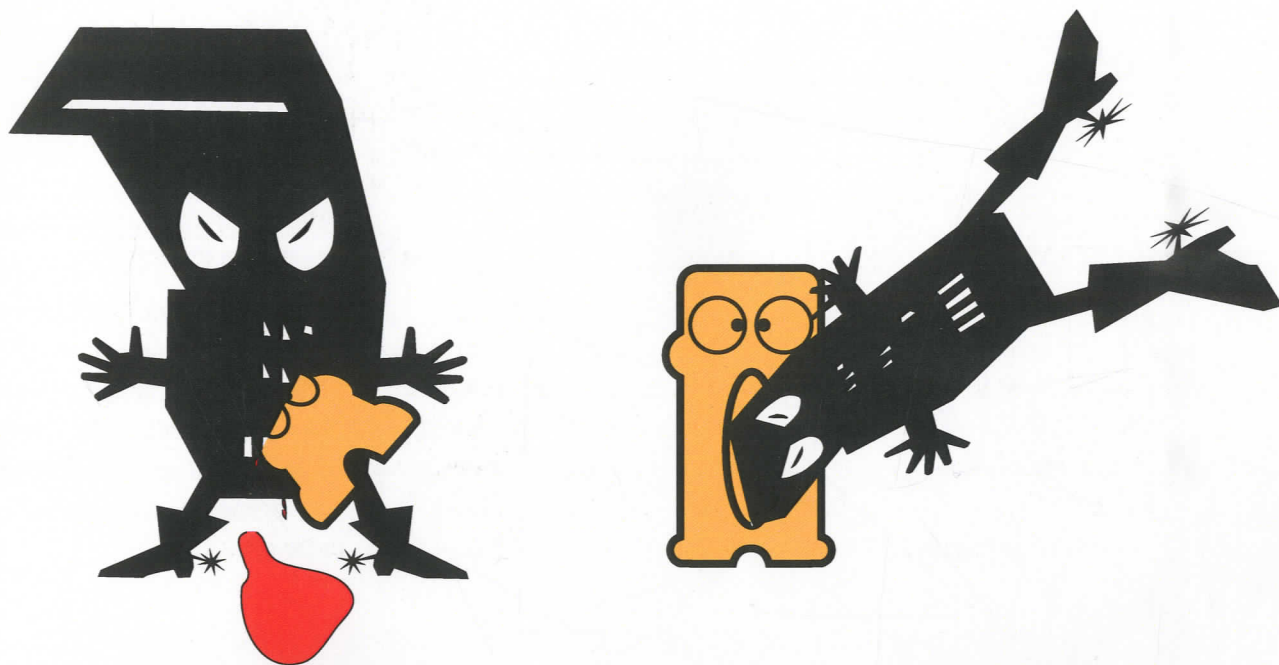
Height: Infinite
Weight: 0
Reach: Global
Record: ?
Hometown: nowhere

VS.



Height: < 1985ft
Weight: BIG
Reach: Local
Record: ?
Hometown: everywhere

If the argument is made that a logo is a shape, and an icon is a form, which of the two win in a battle over identity. One, the logo, is confined to the viewport of 2 dimensional space. It can only be seen at strategic locations on a flat plane. The advantage to this is the logos ability of travel at the speed of information, which is as fast as your wireless connection. So its got the reach, and the advantage of quickness. However, the logo does not have any sense of place. The well traveled image is seen by millions, remembered by ?, but only exists in virtual space and has no tangible connection to the public realm, which is ultimately the consumer. The icon, which exists as a form, performs at a much larger scale. Its sense of place establishes itself within a specified context. This powerful form of iconography is geometric (3 Dimensional). It towers over its "opponents" in both size and stature. The icons fault is that it is vain. It cares to much and tries to hard to be beautiful and appreciated.

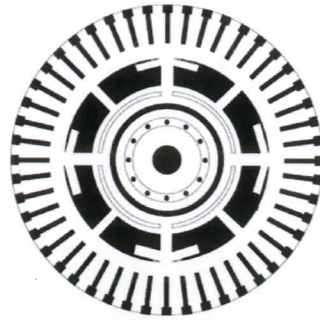


The logics of design in this thesis proposal are derived from modernist ideals of function in architecture. The program first attitude, became and invested mode of thought as well as formal expression. The mode of investigation has since shifted towards a realm of perception and symbolic form. Anthony Vidler describes the shift with a call for programmatic revival in his article "Towards a Theory of the Architectural Program"

Recent proposals and debates over the architectural redevelopment of Ground Zero have highlighted the way in which, over the last two decades, the public role of architecture has been gradually reduced to the symbolic and the emblematic. Its forms of expression are no longer closely tied back to the urban issues and physical planning questions that, from Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) to Team X, Neo-Realism to Neo-Rationalism, Rotterdam to Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin (IBA), once energized and mediated the practice of urban architecture. The questions that have arisen around the ethics and aesthetics appropriate to a site marked by disaster and catastrophe have thrown into relief the drawbacks of an architecture overinvested in symbolic form and individual meditation on memory. Many discussions of the proposals for reconstruction, indeed, seemed to bear out Guy Debord's 1964 anticipation of an all-pervading spectacle culture. The difference, expressed by Hal Foster with reference to the perceived effects of new and dramatic designs such as that for the Guggenheim Museo Bilbao by Frank Gehry, is that "thirty years ago Guy Debord defined spectacle as 'capital accumulated to such a degree that it becomes an image,'" but "the reverse is now true as well: spectacle is an image accumulated to such a degree that it becomes capital."

The issue here is, once again, one of "program," a word all-but jettisoned in the high days of postmodernism and deemed irrelevant to architectural "meaning" since the discrediting of the seemingly narrow functionalism of the modern movement. In revisiting this concept, one of the oldest in the history of professional architecture, there is no intent to invoke program in the limited functionalist or political approaches of early modernism, nor even in the revived typological and diagrammatic forms of late modernism. Rather, a contemporary sense of program would imply the radical interrogation of the ethical and environmental conditions of specific sites, which are considered as programs in themselves.

The evolutionary process of design is what becomes the question here. When did function and program become discredited as design criteria? Did spectacle in architecture bring about capitalist motives or was it the other way around? What is the end result.....how does the design process affect identity? The historical index (fig.1) examines architecture and its evolution by signifying moments of dominance as either formal agenda or programmatic response.



Architect: Jeremy Bentham
 Name: Panopticon
 Date: 1787
 Location: conceptual
 Type: prison
 Response: programmatic
 Identity: identity through creation of a new typology for prisons

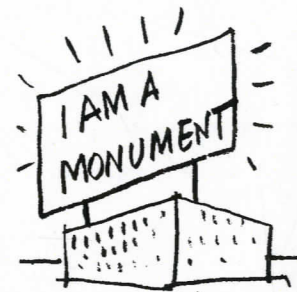


Konstantin Melnikov
 Rusakov Club
 1927
 Moscow, Russia
 auditorium
 programmatic
 Identity through programmatic expression



Martin Maurer
 The Big Duck
 1930
 Flanders, New York
 duck farm store
 iconographic
 iconography of the duck manifest as form

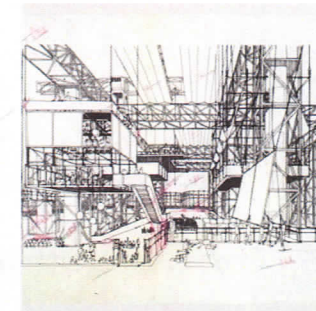
Gradient into formalism (capitalism)



Robert Venturi_Denise S. Brown
 Learning from Las Vegas
 1972
 (Book)
 n/a
 iconographic
 decoration as creation



Le Corbusier
 Firminy Church
 1963
 Firminy, France
 church
 program, context, geometric
 iconic basis derived from "response"



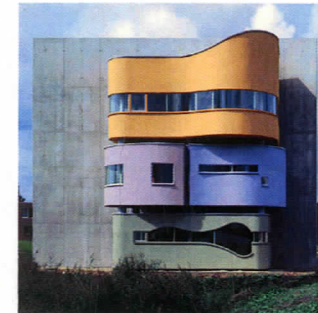
Cedric Price
 Fun Palace
 1965
 East London, UK (conceptual)
 church
 programmatic
 identity created through social agenda and functionality



Richard Rogers_Renzo Piano
 Pompidou Center
 1971
 Paris, France
 museum
 programmatic
 identity created by exposing mundane aspects of the program



Minoru Yamasaki
 Pruitt-Igoe
 1972_demolition
 St. Louis, Mi
 housing
 programmatic
 signified a failed project designed on the basis of program



John Hejduk
 Wall House #2
 1973-(designed)
 Ridgefield, CT (proposed site)
 residence
 iconographic
 figure based architecture



Frank Gehry
 Guggenheim Bilbao
 1997
 Bilbao, Spain
 museum
 formal
 formal architecture designed as sculpture



Norman Foster
 30 St Mary Axe
 2000
 London, England
 Skyscraper
 formal
 symbol based on size and form



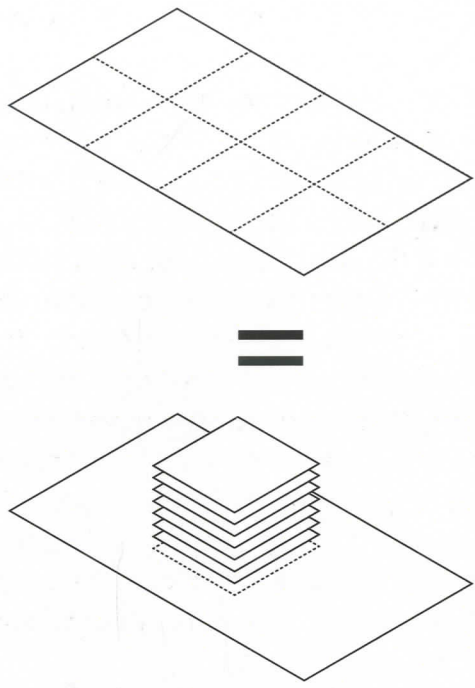
Dubai
 Arab Emirates
 city
 capitalist formal
 formal design based around sale of the image_literally

Expo Pavilion_MVRDV

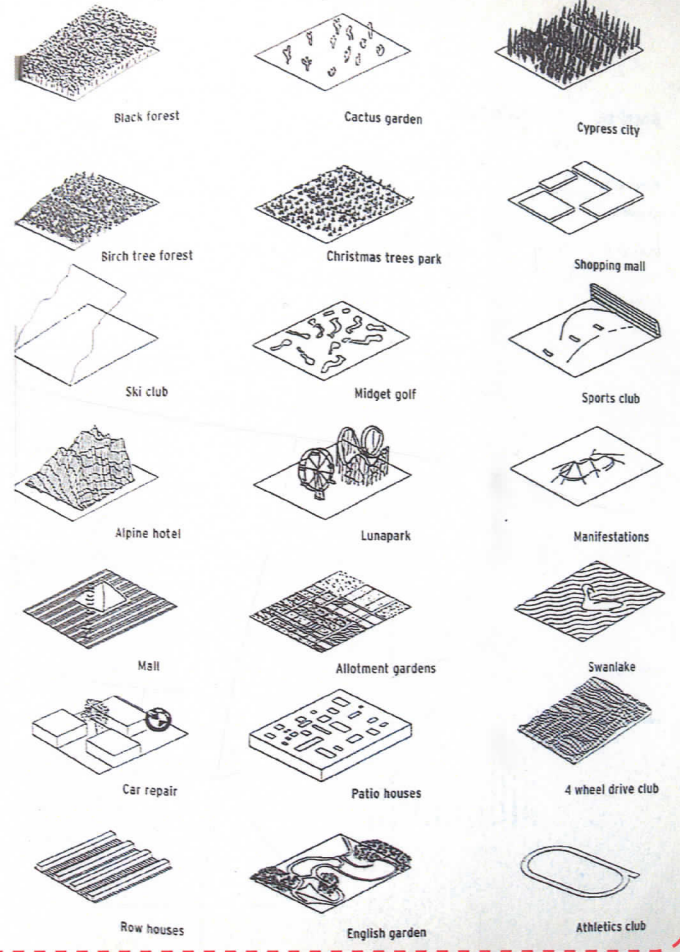


The expo pavilion is a study on the way public space can work in a highly dense environment. The reorganization of multiple landscape typologies from planar to stacked form generates a new way of inhabiting public space. MVRDV has developed a method of design based on the graphic representation of information. This form of graphic information is known to MVRDV as “datascapes”. The creation of “datascapes” makes to projects vital information explicit, narrowing down the possible solutions for the desired result. Therefore, the realized project will become a logical solution based on collected data. The “datascapes” that have been determined by MVRDV are now combined with the implicit values of context (density).

Graphic Expediency



Various landscapes for the Expo Pavilion



The Process of Designing an Icon (part 2): Filters

I have established early in the thesis proposal that an icon can not be created on formal agenda in the 21st century due to the overcrowded landscape of “digitally intricate” design. As these “blobs” continue to plop into our environment they become less interesting and the “foreground” architecture is lost in the sea of novelty. Could it now be that because of place like Dubai, the architect that is the most logical and informal is now the most radical?

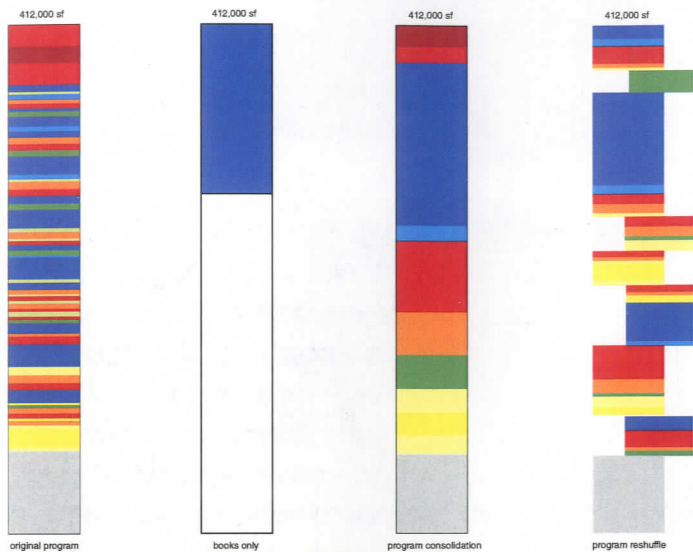
Considering the design of an icon, where do you go after an idea has been resolved through graphic expediency? You attempt to pull out more information through filters. Filters are clues that can generate an architectural response. Typically “filtering” there projects through contextual, programmatic, or social issues, the most radical architects such as Rem Koolhaas, and MVRDV have generated form based on these clues. Theoretically, the more “filters” a project is run through successfully, the more diverse and differentiated the project becomes while increasing its local identity.

Firminy Church_Le Corbusier

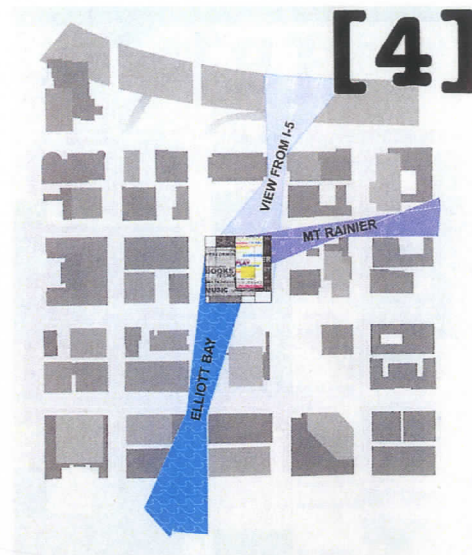


Seattle Public Library_OMA

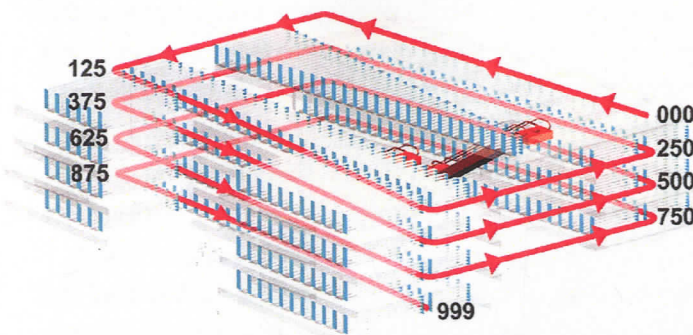




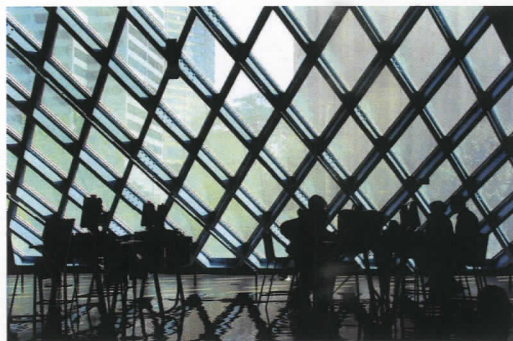
1. Programmatic reshuffle



2. Contextual Filter



3. reorganization



4. Performative skin



How OMA created an Icon in Seattle

The diagrams evolve from original client proposed programmatic features (left) towards a consolidation and subsequent reshuffling. The final programmatic diagram becomes the library's actual building model according to Joshua Ramos Prince. This early diagram immediately becomes a form of "graphic expediency" for the library that is inherently graphic information. The program reshuffle diagram sorts and separates the needs of the library to achieve a condition of flexibility necessary to facilitate unpredictable conditions. The program reshuffle consists of 5 static boxes that are linear because of their predictable conditions. The remaining 4 boxes relate to future uncertainty and therefore need to separate themselves slightly from the predictable programmatic features. This compartmentalization is not by any means a formal gesture intended to achieve authorship by OMA. The result of this diagram through programmatic exploration is the first phase of creating an identity for Seattle and its library. According to Robert Somol, this diagram could be described as a "logo" because of its high level of information about the library, as well as its 2 dimensional nature and graphic expediency.

The direction in which each "uncertain box" is pulled is explicitly contextual where the relationship of each box to a specific aspect of Seattle is quite literal. The ability of the library to relate to the city on a formal level now establishes itself as an icon,

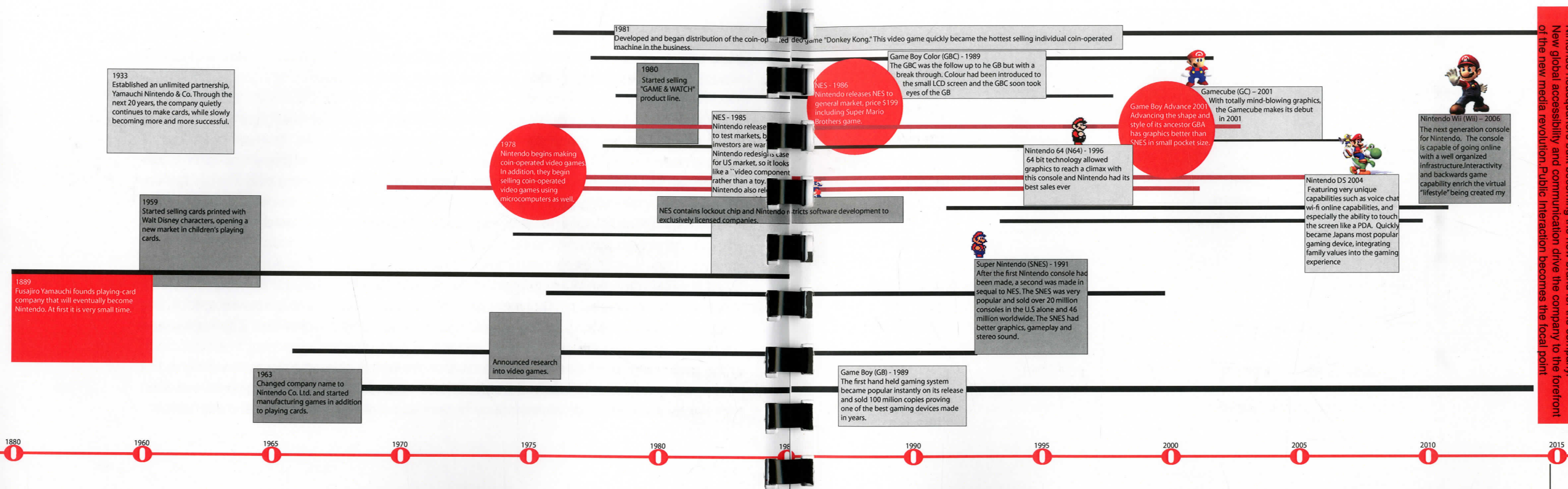


Identifiable as a 3 dimensional object. The incorporation of context into the logo has created a spatial configuration that permanently situated itself.

The high modernist approach to architecture lends itself to becoming generic, meaning that the reading room and the copy room are exactly the same. The establishment of unpredictable space can now create an evolution of organized space and form a new typology. The interior promenade of shelf space for books creates a truly flexible system based on an elevating pathway through 4 floors. By creating a new organization within the library, the previous spatial configuration based on program and context becomes about the occupation and the human interactivity of the space.

The final step towards the creation of the Seattle Public Library as an icon is the skin that wraps the building. The steel skin acting as lateral stability makes the building occupiable. Conforming to the spatial configuration of the boxes like a formed piece of shrink wrap, the structural lattice appeals to performative innovation in architecture. The depth and width of each lattice division make the skin opaque to direct light, but completely transparent from the inside. The combination of all 4 elements create an icon designed not by formal values, but by hyper-rational thought and logical composition.

Nintendo Timeline- A brief history



Identity and Program

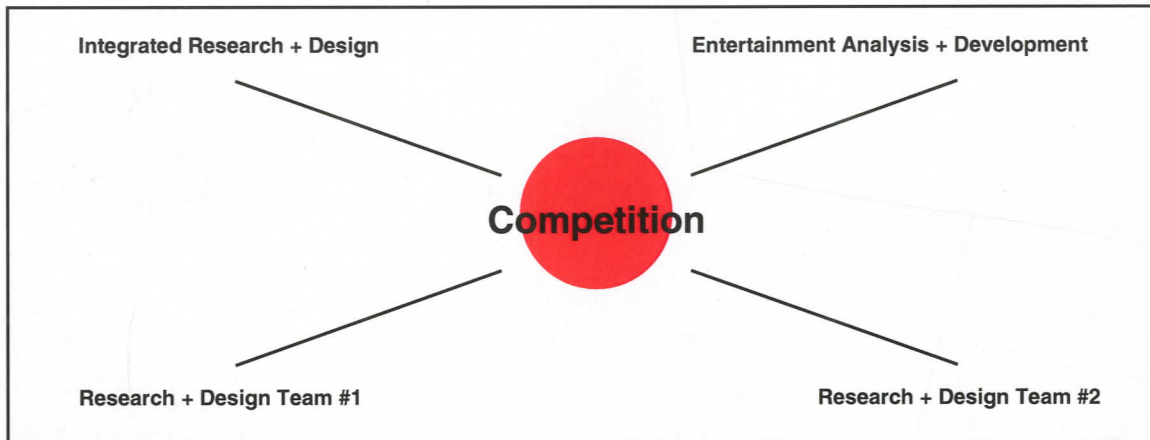
Program in this thesis project is the primary conductor for the translation of research and analysis into architectural form and tectonics. The programmatic evaluation and reconfiguration is a reflection of a corporate headquarters in terms establishment and maintenance of identity. The program of the Nintendo Headquarters is being reconsidered to maintain local identity in Kyoto. This critique on the existing condition of the Nintendo Headquarters is looking to become an alternative to the fortified stacked structures that become redundant in urban environments.

In its present state, the Nintendo HQ is a fortified white box detached from the community that surrounds it. Each level of the stacked box fills itself with a singular program maintaining a segregated environment amongst the Research and Development teams that Nintendo has become famous for.

The major element of focus in the existing program is that of the four competing Research and Developments teams. The interaction of the teams would be enhanced by creating an open system of communication while maintaining privacy from the public community. The existing programmatic elements of this private architecture are combined with public amenities and reshuffled to provide a place of social interaction that maintains needed privacy.

Through programmatic speculation within Nintendos current site, identification of critical moments of exchange, interactivity, and separation become apparent and directly affect

the formal response the building will take. Through the resolution of programmatic elements, the diagram will become the “logo” for the building ready to be imbedded in the process of design towards Nintendo's new icon in Kyoto.



Nintendos creative model

Existing Program (Private)

Research and Development Teams28,000 ft.²**Office Space**

Research and Development Team 1

9600 ft²

Research and Development Team 2

4400 ft²

Integrated Research and Design

4400 ft²

Entertainment Analysis and Development Team

9600 ft²

Waiting Area(2)

1200 ft²

Restrooms(4)

800 ft²**Management**17,400 ft.²**Office Space**13000 ft²

Conference rooms(8)

4000 ft²

Restrooms(2)

400 ft²**Other**3,500 ft.²

Special Planning

2000 ft²

Marketing

750 ft²

Legal

750 ft²**Archive**5,000 ft.²

Climate Controlled Storage

2000 ft²

Storage

3000 ft²**Family Services**5,000 ft.²

Day-care

2000 ft²

Restrooms

3000 ft²**Auditorium**10,000 ft.²

Lobby

1000 ft²

Seating

9000 ft²

Proposed Program (Public)

Restaurant

5400 ft.²

- Lobby
- Seating
- Kitchen
- Restrooms
- Cafe

200 ft.²
2000 ft.²
1200 ft.²
400 ft.²
1600 ft.²

Exhibition

14,600 ft.²

- Lobby/Ticket Area
- Gift Shop
- Restrooms
- Exhibition space
- Game Library
- Testing Lab/ Interactive Center

800 ft.²
1000 ft.²
800 ft.²
8000 ft.²
2000 ft.²
2000 ft.²

Education Center

6000 ft.²

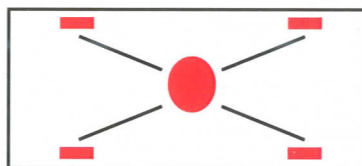
- Testing Lab/ Interactive Center
- Classrooms(6)

2000 ft.²
4000 ft.²

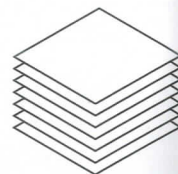
Total 94,900 ft.²

Parking

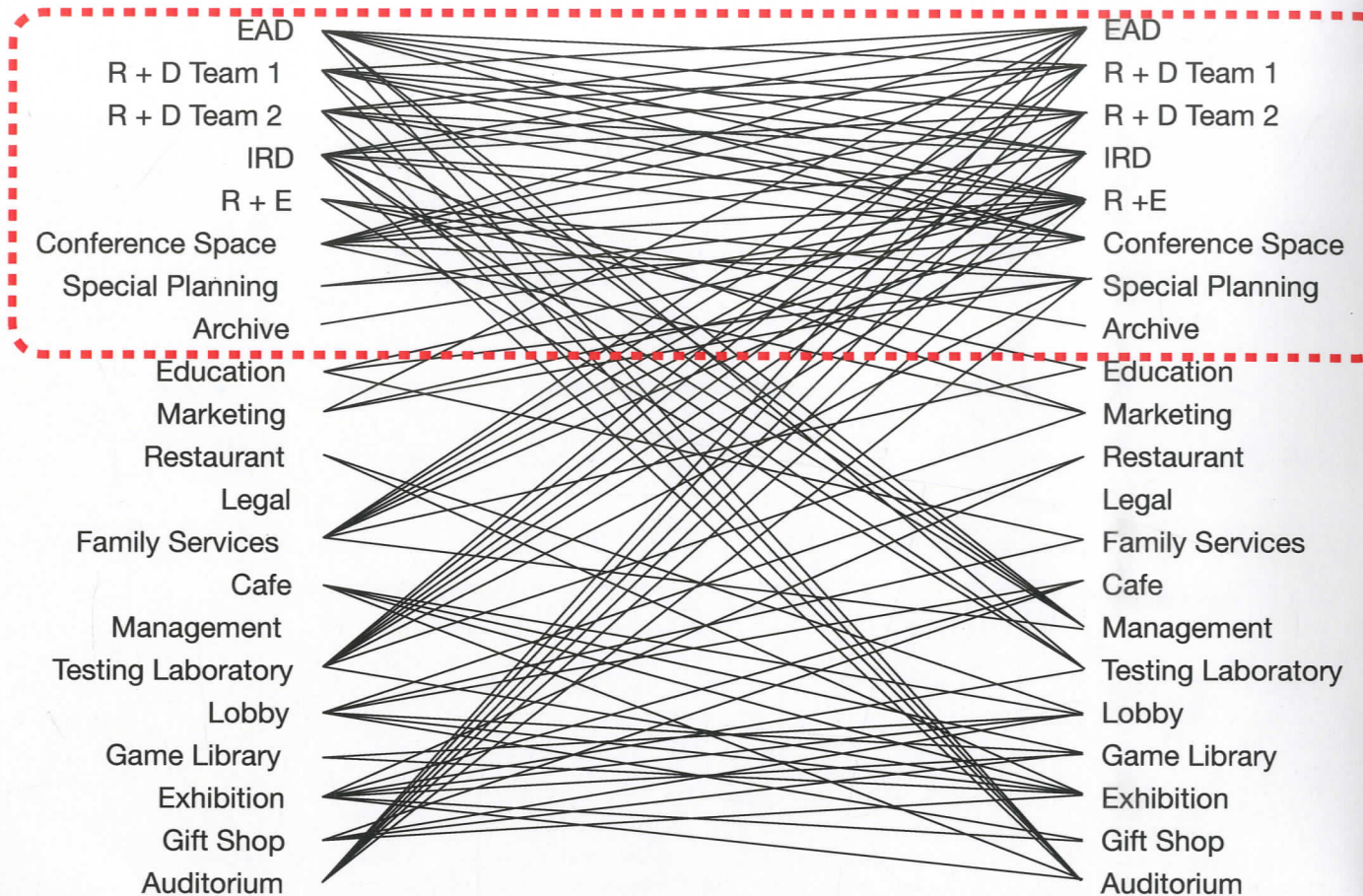
15000 ft.²



≠



Vital Program



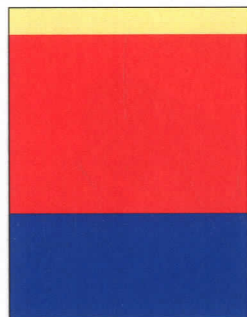


100% private
48,900 sq. ft.

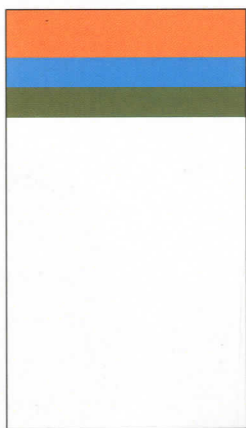
100% private
20,000 sq. ft.

100% public
26,000 sq. ft.

66% private
94,900 sq. ft.



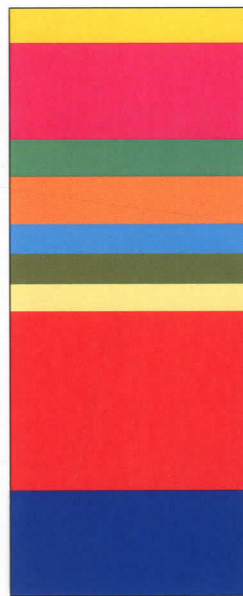
existing program division



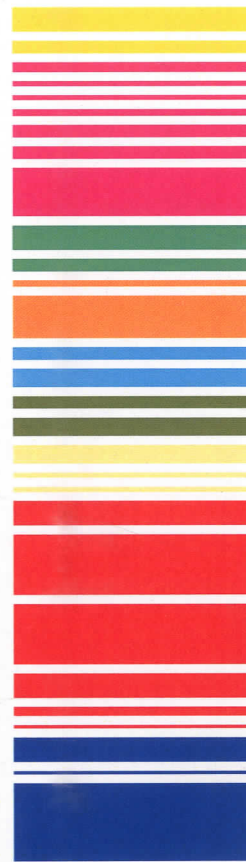
added private program



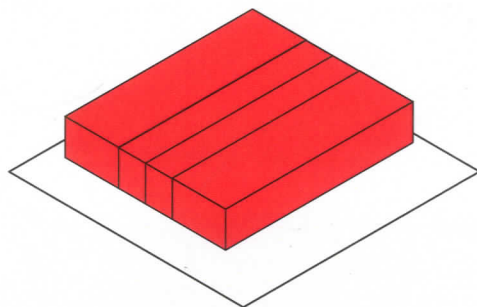
added public program



total new program

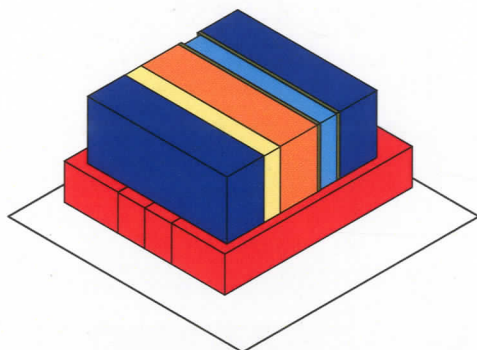


Program Expansion



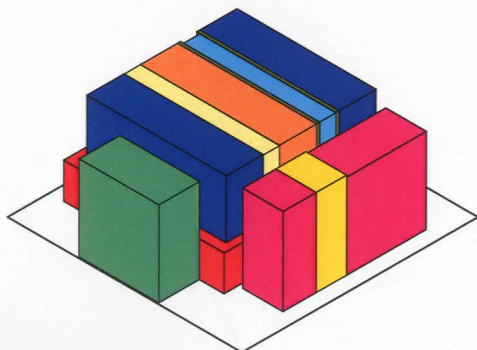
RESEARCH

Situate research teams on the site



PRIVATE
AUD
PRIVATE
RESEARCH

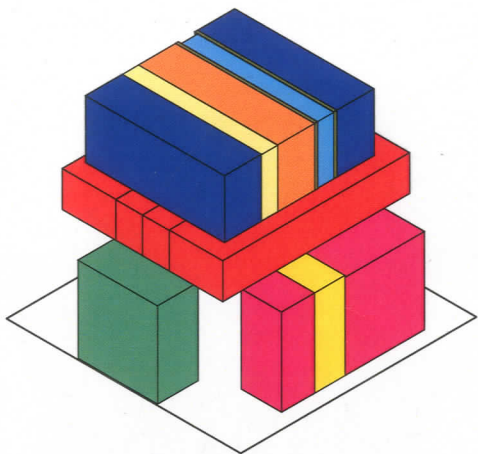
Incorporate the remaining private program on top of the research area



EXHIBITION
CAFE
EXHIBITION
RESEARCH

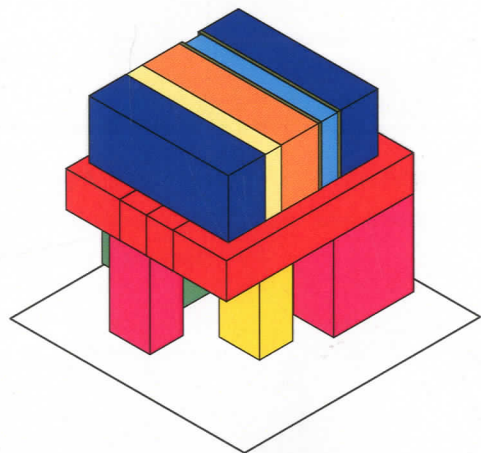
Wrap the headquarters with the public program

The four competing Research and Development teams are the main focus of this programmatic speculation. The situation of the research teams will essentially become the armature for the remaining programmatic elements to attach. As the program attaches to the centrally focused research teams, new relationships will begin to emerge. This emergence will now result in the first step towards the form of the new headquarters.



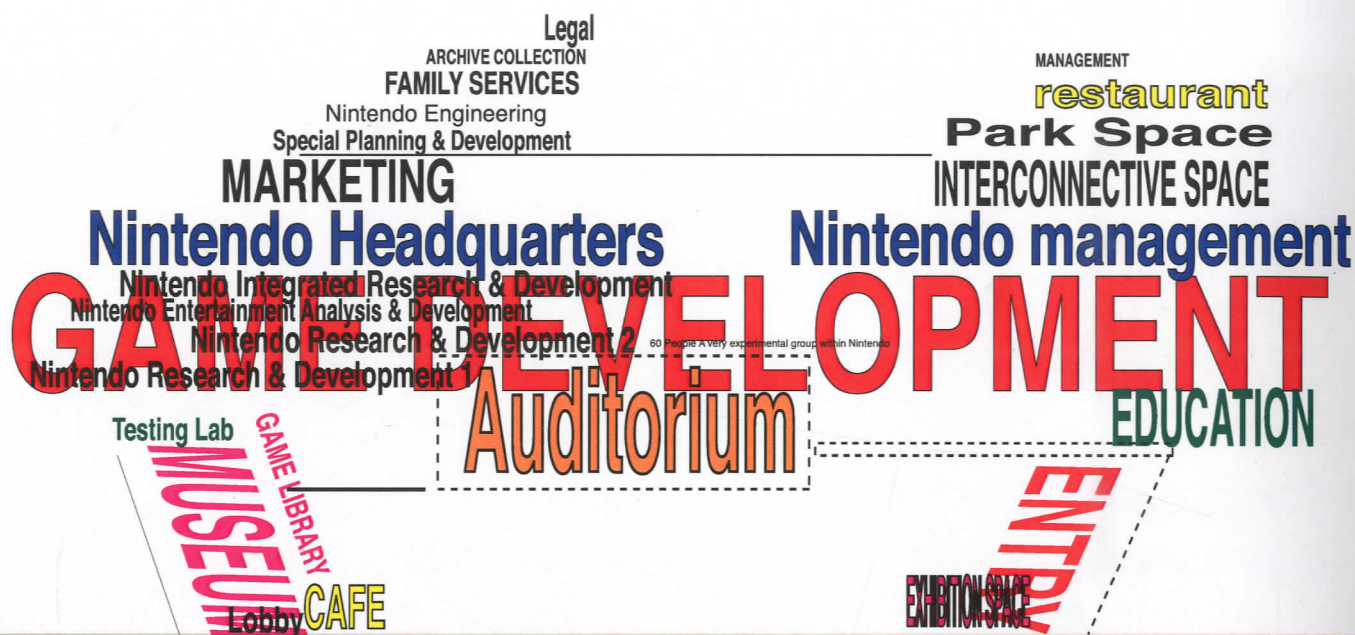
PRIVATE
AUD
PRIVATE
RESEARCH
EXHIBITION
CAFE

Raise private program in reference to the surrounding mountains

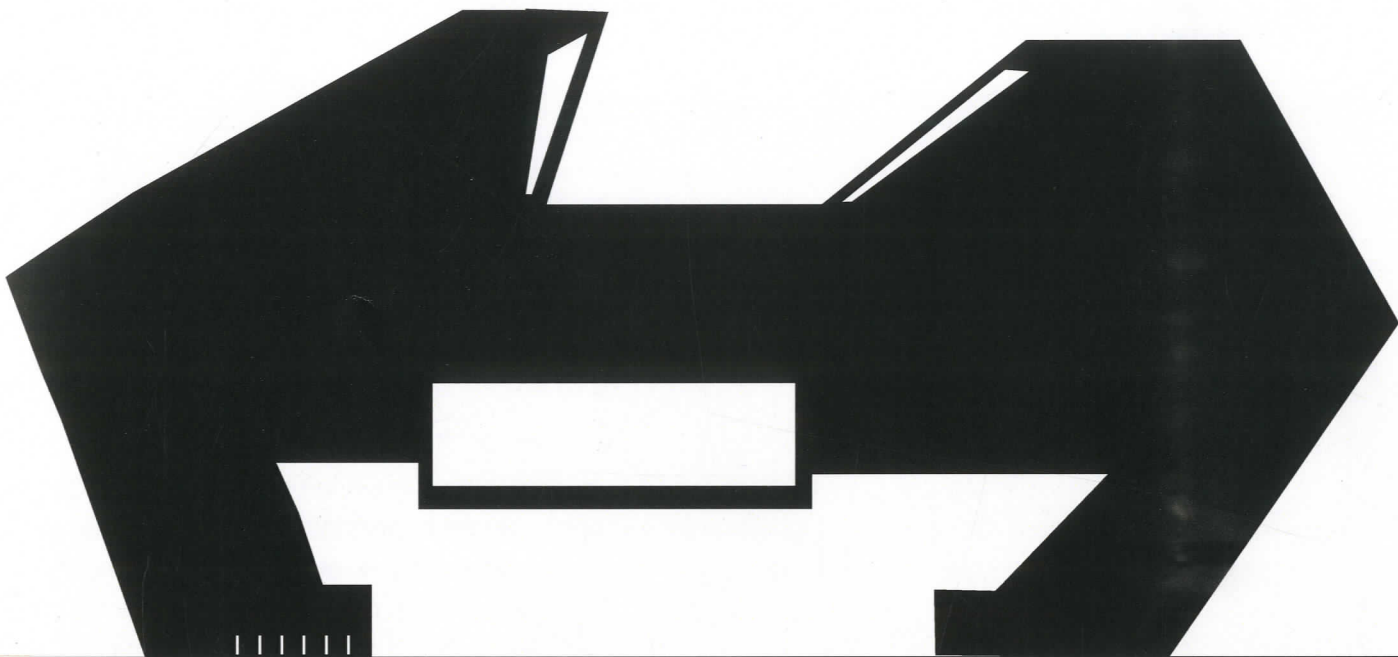


PRIVATE
AUD
PRIVATE
RESEARCH
CAFE
EXHIBITION
EXHIBITION

Direct public program inward to extend the street corner and act as structure.



Programmatic diagram result



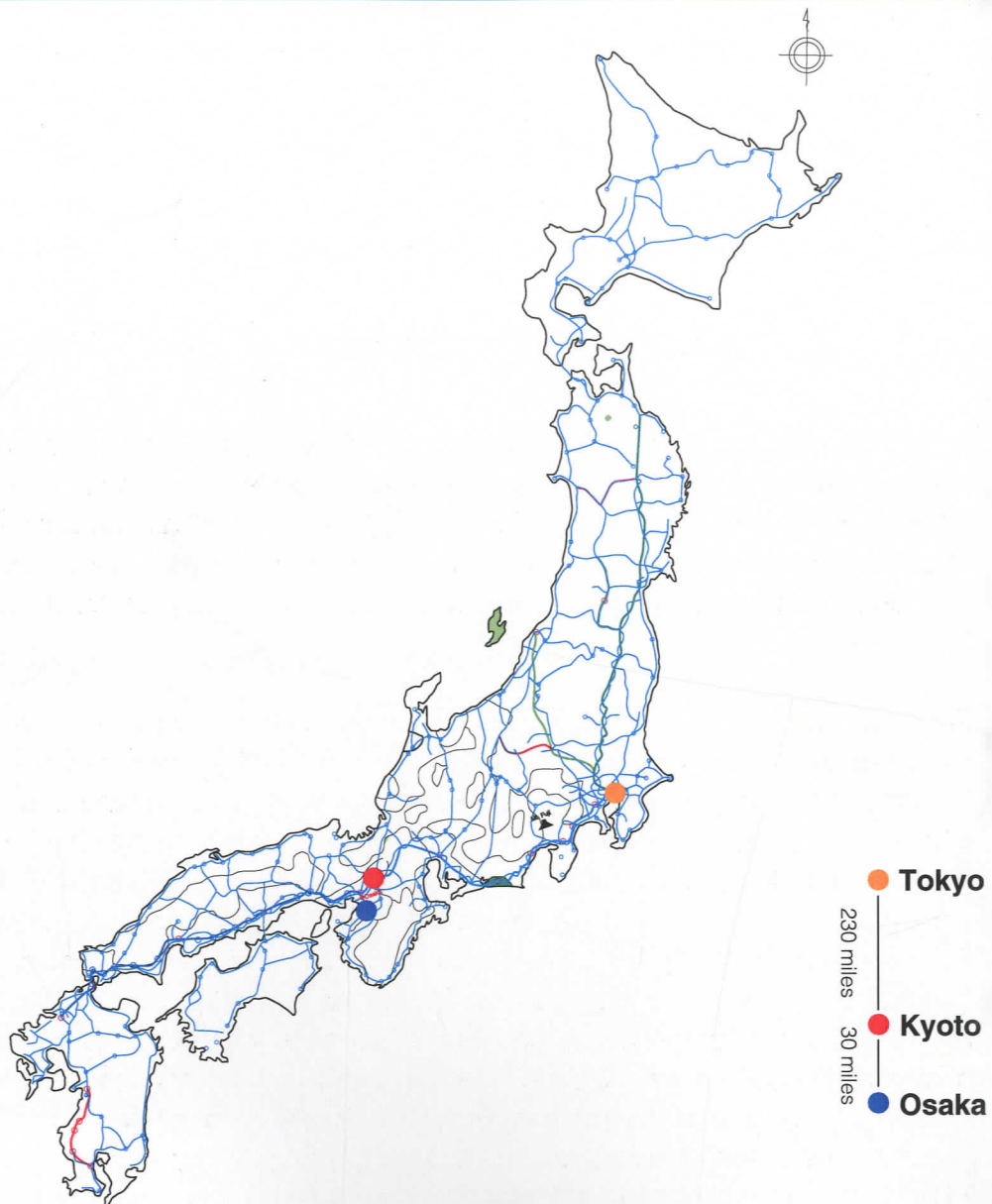
The programmatic diagram has now resulted in a logo of simple shape that carries explicit information about the program, site, and social conditions. By creating this logo, phase one of design for the icon is complete

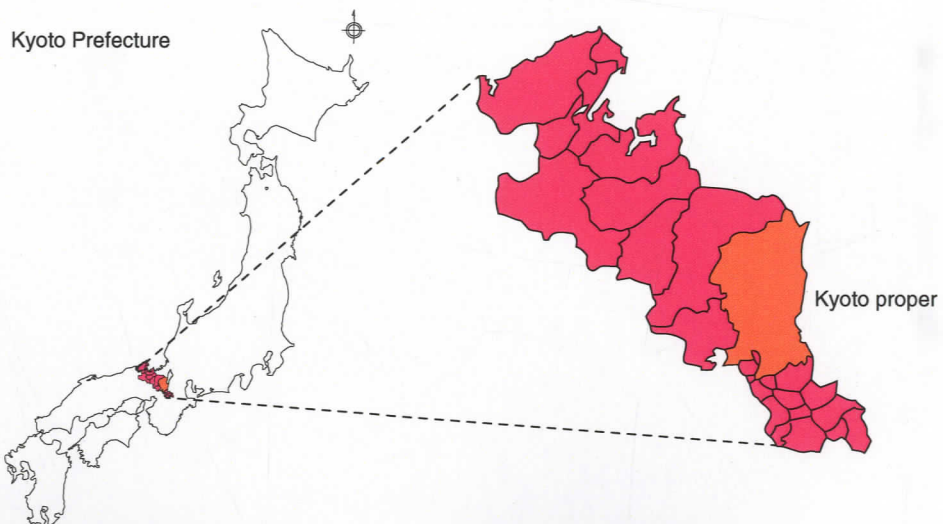
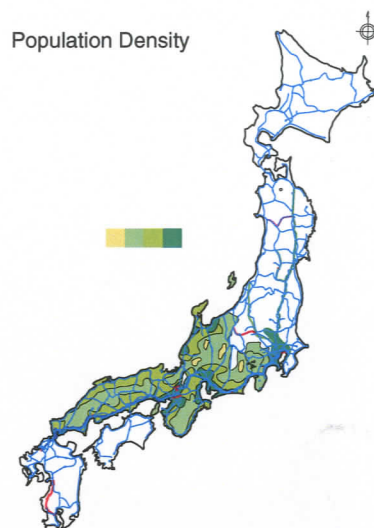
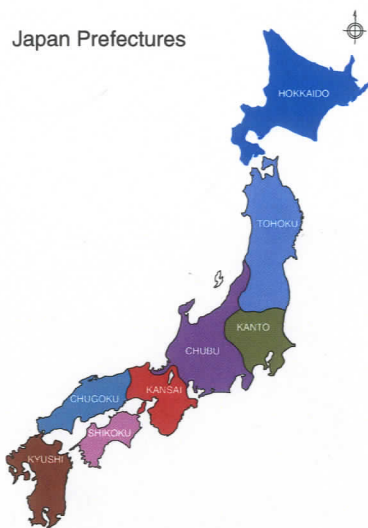
Background of Kyoto, Japan

Kyoto served as Japan's capital and the seat of the imperial court for more than 1,000 years, from its founding in 794 until 1868, when the emperor moved to Tokyo. The city is rich in historic and cultural sites, housing many of Japan's most renowned temples, shrines, palaces, and gardens.

Kyoto is one of Japan's largest cities. It lies 230 miles west of Tokyo and 28 miles northeast of Osaka. The city and the rest of Kyoto Prefecture are part of Japan's Kinki region. They are also located within the Kanshin Industrial Zone, which also encompasses Osaka and Kobe. The landlocked city, is surrounded on three sides by mountain ranges, and the Yamato plain, which is the heartland of ancient Japanese civilization, is situated to the south.

Earthquakes, fires, and damage inflicted during civil wars have left few secular buildings that predate the 17th century in Kyoto. However, some important older temples remain. Development throughout the city has created an eclectic mix of old and contemporary architecture. Preservation of the city's historic character is a controversial issue in Kyoto. Many old wooden buildings were razed during World War II (1939-1945) to prevent fires from spreading, and since then more than 40,000 old townhouses have been demolished. To protect the historic appearance of remaining cultural monuments, the city government enacted the Kyoto Urban Landscape Ordinance in 1972. The ordinance established height and design guidelines for the central city and generally forbids construction that obstructs the view of historic structures. Despite these ordinances and objections from citizen groups, developers pushed through a relaxation of city codes to construct the gigantic Kyoto Station complex. The building, designed by Japanese architect Hara Hiroshi, combines shopping, hotel, and transportation services under one roof.

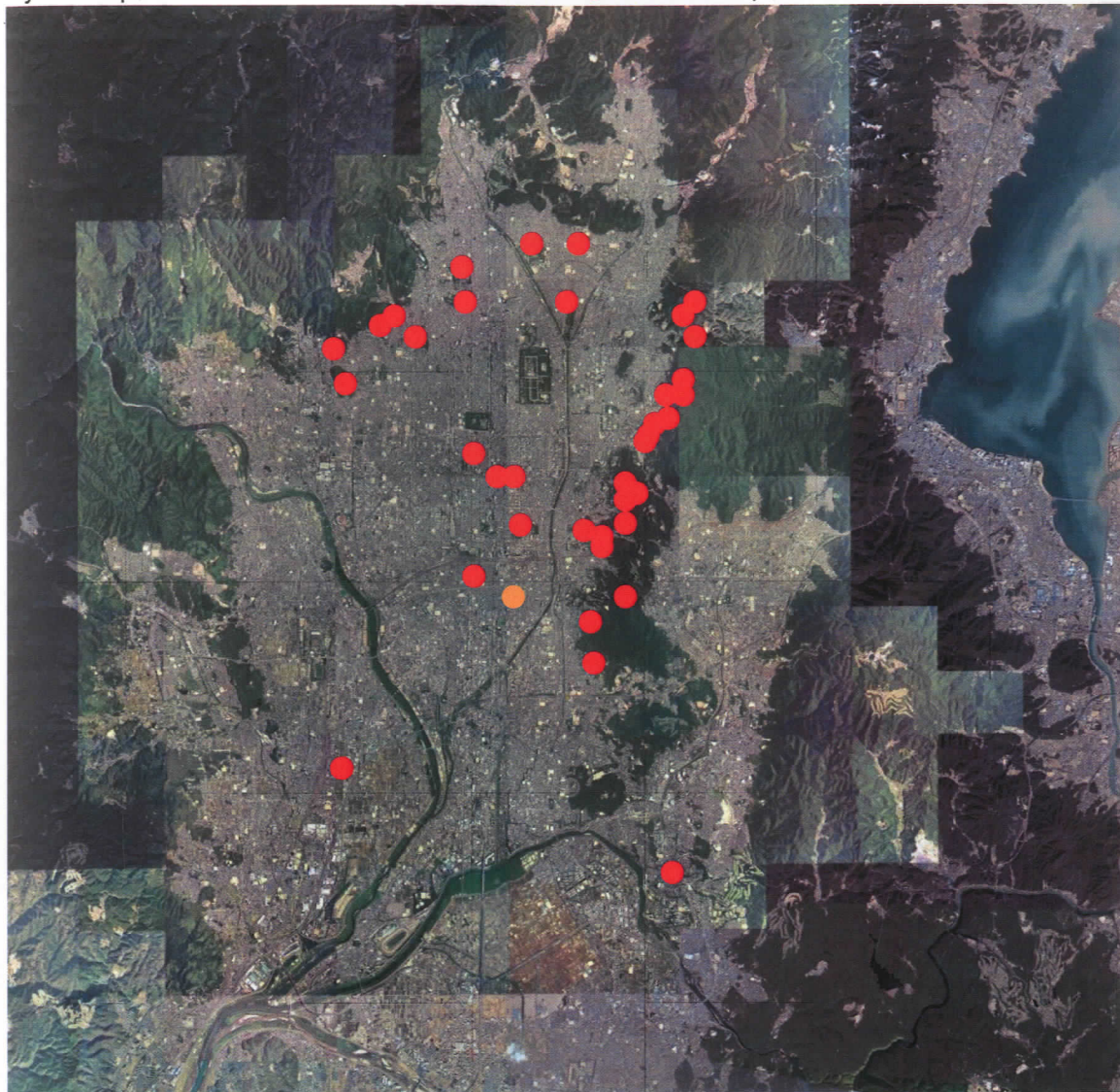


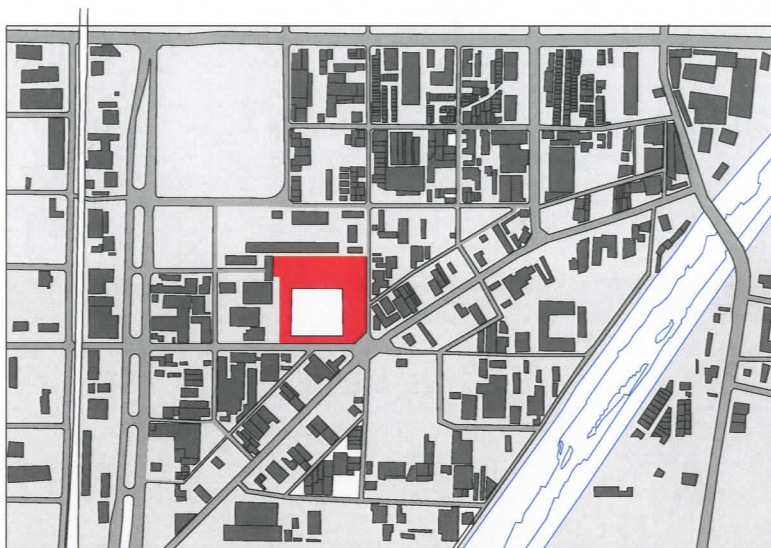


Kyoto Proper

● ancient temple

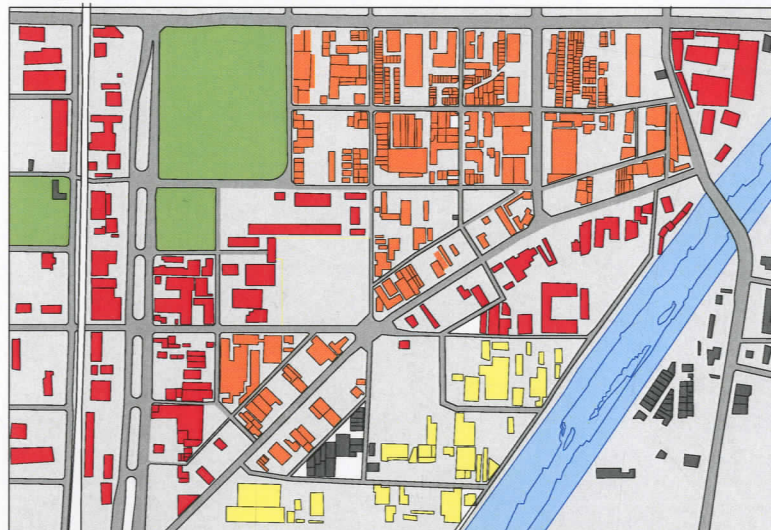
● Nintendo





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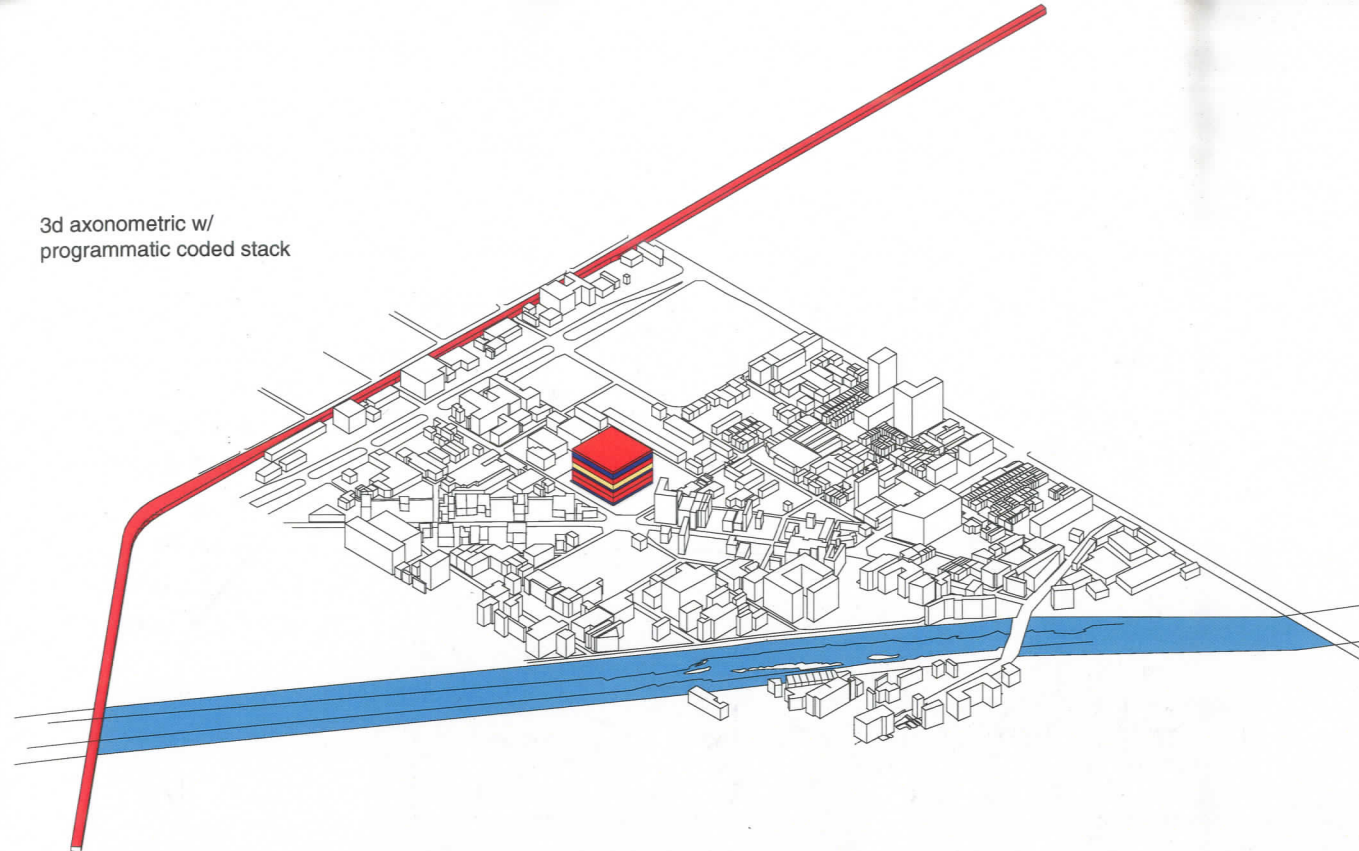
The current Nintendo site located in the physical center of Kyoto, situates itself between the Kamo River and main rail line. The square site measures 420 ft. in each direction and lies at the corner of a six street intersection.



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■ housing
 ■ commercial
 ■ industrial
 ■ kamo River

3d axonometric w/
programmatic coded stack



north/south section



east/west section

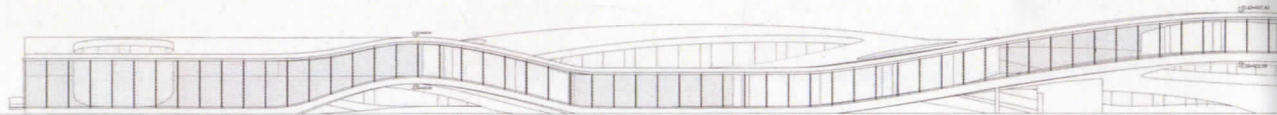


Rail Line

Nintendo

Kamo River

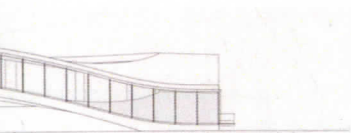
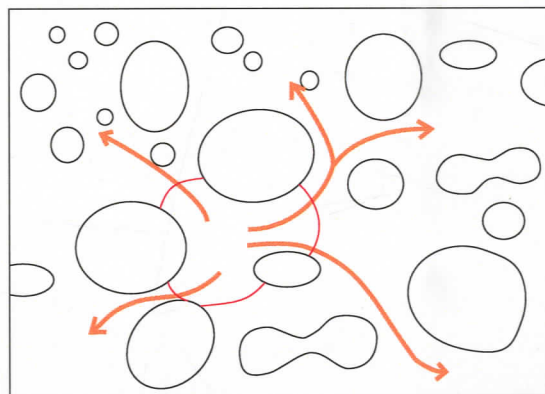
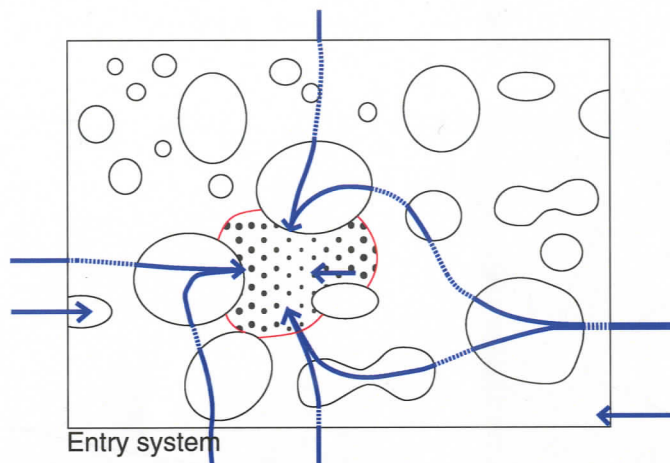
Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine



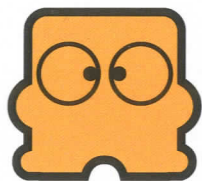
Alzado Sur / South elevation

SANAA
Rolex Learning Center_ Lausanne, Switzerland

The Rolex Learning Center is designed as a building that you literally walk through before you enter. The centrally located entry space is made possible through a contextual response to the surrounding mountain region where the building arches creating an entryway. The central entry also enables inhabitable program on the entire perimeter of the building.

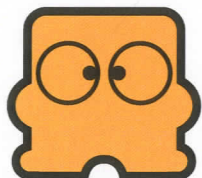


Logo defined



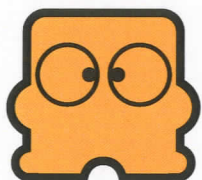
= Global

Virtual symbol valid as a form of universal communication



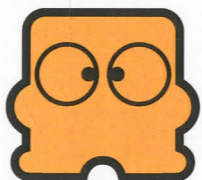
= Expandable

Capable of Infinite Multiplication



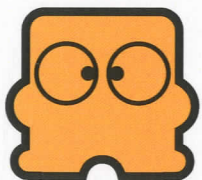
= Shape

2 Dimensional - Graphic;
Associated with the Diagram



= "Cool"

Represented through low-definition Media;
Conditioned by "life-styles" and remaining in the background



= Idea

Representative of a thought process with no direct sense of place

Icon defined



=

Local

Geometric symbol contributing to local identity and place



=

Form

3 Dimensional - Geometric



=

“Hot”

Represented through High-definition Media;
Lives in the foreground as a differentiated form

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